

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH T. ARTELETT, OTHERWISE TARTLET, IS DULY INTRODUCED
TO THE
READER.

If T. Artelett had been a Parisian, his compatriots would not have failed to nickname him Tartlet, but as he had already received this title we do not hesitate to describe him by it. If Tartlet was not a Frenchman he ought to have been one.

In his "Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem," Chateaubriand tells of a little man "powdered and frizzed in the old-fashioned style, with a coat of apple green, a waistcoat of drouget, shirt-frill and cuffs of muslin, who scraped a violin and made the Iroquois dance 'Madeleine Friquet.'"

The Californians are not Iroquois, far from it; but Tartlet was none the less professor of dancing and deportment in the capital of their state. If they did not pay him for his lessons, as they had his predecessor in beaver-skins and bear-hams, they did so in dollars. If in speaking of his pupils he did not talk of the "bucks and their squaws," it was because his pupils were highly civilized, and because in his opinion he had contributed considerably to their civilization.

Tartlet was a bachelor, and aged about forty-five at the time we introduce him to our readers. But for a dozen years or so his marriage

with a lady of somewhat mature age had been expected to take place.

Under present circumstances it is perhaps advisable to give "two or three lines" concerning his age, appearance, and position in life. He would have responded to such a request we imagine as follows, and thus we can dispense with drawing his portrait from a moral and physical point of view.

"He was born on the 17th July, 1835, at a quarter-past three in the morning.

"His height is five feet, two inches, three lines.

"His girth is exactly two feet, three inches.

"His weight, increased by some six pounds during the last year, is one hundred and fifty one pounds, two ounces.

"He has an oblong head.

"His hair, very thin above the forehead, is grey chestnut, his forehead is high, his face oval, his complexion fresh coloured.

"His eyes--sight excellent--a greyish brown, eyelashes and eyebrows clear chestnut, eyes themselves somewhat sunk in their orbits beneath the arches of the brows.

"His nose is of medium size, and has a slight indentation towards the end of the left nostril.

"His cheeks and temples are flat and hairless.

"His ears are large and flat.

"His mouth, of middling size, is absolutely free from bad teeth.

"His lips, thin and slightly pinched, are covered with a heavy moustache and imperial, his chin is round and also shaded with a many-tinted beard.

"A small mole ornaments his plump neck--in the nape.

"Finally, when he is in the bath it can be seen that his skin is white and smooth.

"His life is calm and regular. Without being robust, thanks to his great temperance, he has kept his health uninjured since his birth. His lungs are rather irritable, and hence he has not contracted the bad habit of smoking. He drinks neither spirits, coffee, liqueurs, nor neat wine. In a word, all that could prejudicially affect his nervous system is vigorously excluded from his table. Light beer, and weak wine and water are the only beverages he can take without danger. It is on account of his carefulness that he has never had to consult a doctor since his life began.

"His gesture is prompt, his walk quick, his character frank and open. His thoughtfulness for others is extreme, and it is on account of this that in the fear of making his wife unhappy, he has never entered into matrimony."

Such would have been the report furnished by Tartlet, but desirable as he might be to a lady of a certain age, the projected union had hitherto failed. The professor remained a bachelor, and continued to give lessons in dancing and deportment.

It was in this capacity that he entered the mansion of William W. Kolderup. As time rolled on his pupils gradually abandoned him, and he ended by becoming one wheel more in the machinery of the wealthy establishment.

After all, he was a brave man, in spite of his eccentricities. Everybody liked him. He liked Godfrey, he liked Phina, and they liked him. He had only one ambition in the world, and that was to teach them all the secrets of his art, to make them in fact, as far as deportment was concerned, two highly accomplished individuals.

Now, what would you think? It was he, this Professor Tartlet, whom William W. Kolderup had chosen as his nephew's companion during the projected voyage. Yes! He had reason to believe that Tartlet had not a little contributed to imbue Godfrey with this roaming mania, so as to perfect himself by a tour round the world. William W. Kolderup had

resolved that they should go together. On the morrow, the 16th of April, he sent for the professor to his office.

The request of the nabob was an order for Tartlet. The professor left his room, with his pocket violin--generally known as a kit--so as to be ready for all emergencies. He mounted the great staircase of the mansion with his feet academically placed as was fitting for a dancing-master; knocked at the door of the room, entered--his body half inclined, his elbows rounded, his mouth on the grin--and waited in the third position, after having crossed his feet one before the other, at half their length, his ankles touching and his toes turned out. Any one but Professor Tartlet placed in this sort of unstable equilibrium would have tottered on his base, but the professor preserved an absolute perpendicularity.

"Mr. Tartlet," said William W. Kolderup, "I have sent for you to tell you some news which I imagine will rather surprise you."

"As you think best!" answered the professor.

"My nephew's marriage is put off for a year or eighteen months, and Godfrey, at his own request, is going to visit the different countries of the old and new world."

"Sir," answered Tartlet, "my pupil, Godfrey, will do honour to the country of his birth, and--"

"And, to the professor of deportment who has initiated him into etiquette," interrupted the merchant, in a tone of which the guileless Tartlet failed to perceive the irony.

And, in fact, thinking it the correct thing to execute an "assemblée," he first moved one foot and then the other, by a sort of semi-circular side slide, and then with a light and graceful bend of the knee, he bowed to William W. Kolderup.

"I thought," continued the latter, "that you might feel a little regret at separating from your pupil?"

"The regret will be extreme," answered Tartlet, "but should it be necessary--"

"It is not necessary," answered William W. Kolderup, knitting his bushy eyebrows.

"Ah!" replied Tartlet.

Slightly troubled, he made a graceful movement to the rear, so as to pass from the third to the fourth position; but he left the breadth of a foot between his feet, without perhaps being conscious of what he was doing.

"Yes!" added the merchant in a peremptory tone, which admitted not of the ghost of a reply; "I have thought it would really be cruel to

separate a professor and a pupil so well made to understand each other!"

"Assuredly!--the journey?" answered Tartlet, who did not seem to want to understand.

"Yes! Assuredly!" replied William W. Kolderup; "not only will his travels bring out the talents of my nephew, but the talents of the professor to whom he owes so correct a bearing."

Never had the thought occurred to this great baby that one day he would leave San Francisco, California, America, to roam the seas. Such an idea had never entered the brain of a man more absorbed in choregraphy than geography, and who was still ignorant of the suburbs of the capital beyond ten miles radius. And now this was offered to him. He was to understand that nolens volens he was to expatriate himself, he himself was to experience with all their costs and inconveniences the very adventures he had recommended to his pupil! Here, decidedly, was something to trouble a brain much more solid than his, and the unfortunate Tartlet for the first time in his life felt an involuntary yielding in the muscles of his limbs, suppld as they were by thirty-five years' exercise.

"Perhaps," said he, trying to recall to his lips the stereotyped smile of the dancer which had left him for an instant,--"perhaps--am I not--"

"You will go!" answered William W. Kolderup like a a man with whom discussion was useless.

To refuse was impossible. Tartlet did not even think of such a thing. What was he in the house? A thing, a parcel, a package to be sent to every corner of the world. But the projected expedition troubled him not a little.

"And when am I to start?" demanded he, trying to get back into an academical position.

"In a month."

"And on what raging ocean has Mr. Kolderup decided that his vessel should bear his nephew and me?"

"The Pacific, at first."

"And on what point of the terrestrial globe shall I first set foot?"

"On the soil of New Zealand," answered William W. Kolderup; "I have remarked that the New Zealanders always stick their elbows out! Now you can teach them to turn them in!"

And thus was Professor Tartlet selected as the travelling-companion of Godfrey Morgan.

A nod from the merchant gave him to understand that the audience had terminated. He retired, considerably agitated, and the performance of

the special graces which he usually displayed in this difficult act left a good deal to be desired. In fact, for the first time in his life, Professor Tartlet, forgetting in his preoccupation the most elementary principles of his art, went out with his toes turned in!